RESEARCH PROPOSAL (SYNOPSIS) ON

PROSPECTS AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES OF GEOTOURISM IN PURULIYA DISTRICT, WEST BENGAL

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BROAD FRAMEWORK OF RESEARCH PROPOSAL PRESENTATION

PROSPECTS AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES OF GEOTOURISM IN PURULIYA DISTRICT, WEST BENGAL

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Conceptual framework –

The concept of Geotourism entangles with 'geographically sustainable tourism', the common definition in USA. It is a new aspect in the field of tourism industry. The concept was first postulated by T.A. Hose in England in 1995 (Hose, 1995, 2011, 2016; Valezquez, 2013). But the term actually coined by the national geographic senior editor Jonathan B. Tourtellot and his wife, Sally Bensusen in 1997 in response to requests for a term and concept which is more encompassing than ecotourism and sustainable tourism to depict the geographical scenario with tourism resources for a region (Tourtellot, 2013; Hose, 2016).

Basically there are two viewpoints in Geotourism concept a. geologically and geomorphologically focused sustainable tourism or abiotic nature based tourism and the other is b. geographically sustainable tourism, the common definition in USA . According to the National Geograpgic Society, tourism that sustains and enhances the identity of a territory, taking into consideration environment, culture, asthetics, heritage and the well-being of its residents can be called as Geotourism.

To mitigate this conceptual difference International Congress of Geotourism (2011) in the Arouca declaration in Portugal opined that Geotourism should be defined as '*tourism which sustains and enhances the identity of a territory, taking into consideration its geology, environment, culture, aesthetics, heritage and the well beings of its residents*' (Arouca declaration, 2011). The present research work will follow the viewpoints of 'Arouca declaration'.

This thesis tries to find out the answers of some basic research questions –

1. Why tourism is neglected in Puruliya till date despite having lots of resources for tourism?
2. What does the local community think on the utilization of physical and cultural resources of the district in promoting tourism?

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3. How does the economy of the local community can be upgraded through implementing Geotourism?

Objective – There are some basic objectives in the present thesis -

- Identify the relevant Geotourism sites on the basis of their existing natural resources, age old cultural heritage and historically important monuments.
- To assess the public attitude of both local people and tourists towards the encouragement of tourism.
- To evaluate the tourism potentiality of all sites in response to their geographical background.
- To make an account of the existing problems relating to Geotourism activities.
- Preparation of a base plan for enhancing the tourism potentialities of Puruliya in response to the strengthening of the economy.

Database and methods – The entire work should be done following the phases given below

Pre-field work –

a.] Basic concept of geotourism and evolutionary history of the concept will be studied on the basis of previous literatures.

b.] To get an idea of the geophysical character of Puruliya District topographical sheets of the Survey of India, DPMS (District planning mapping series), DRM (District resource map), and satellite imageries will be consulted.

c.] To get information regarding its socio-cultural background relevant literatures, news paper articles, books and journals have to be consulted.

d.] On the basis of both of this geophysical and cultural background base map for location and of classified sites will be prepared.

Field work –

To gather data related to existing infrastructural facilities, road network and connectivity, aesthetic value, scientific value, educational value of the sites field verification of the individual sites will be done.

Post field work -

On the basis of pre-field and post field data existing as well as future potentialities of Geotourism will be assessed by using different statistical and graphical techniques and models. Developmental strategies will be prepared following geographical sustainability of the sites.

Selection of study area – Puruliya districts lies on the western margin of the state West Bengal. The district is situated in between 22°43'00" N. and 23°42'00" N., and 85°49'00" E. to 86°54'00" E. The total geographical area of the district is 6259 sq. km. The puruliya district is the most drought prone district in West Bengal, characterised by undulating topography of its most of parts. The only plain area is found alongside the river banks, incorporated with alluvial soils. Most of the parts are accompanied with red and laterite soils which are very much infertile and of low water retention capacity in nature. That's why agricultural productivity is very low in puruliya district. The total geographical area of Puruliya is 625650 hectare and cultivable area is 68.47%. Only 38 % people are directly engaged in the cultivation process. Besides, the district is deprived from the industrial growth and development also since a long time. As a result only a few people are engaged as a workers / employers in this sector of economy. Thus, Puruliya district has been remained backward till now.

On the other hand physiographically the district is rich, as extending part of Chotonagpur plateau, in forest clad hillocks, swift drainage through the rugged terrain, waterfalls etc with attractive scenic beauty. The district has also an age old wealthy inherent tribal culture and magnificient historical temples, deuls etc. Optimum utilization of these natural and cultural resources in response to its geographical background can unveil the Geotourism potentiality of the district. Moreover it will provide stable alternative livelihood which will upgrade the economic status of the district as well as the culture.

Literature review –

Hose (1995) defined Geotourism as 'the way to enable tourists to acquire knowledge and understanding about the geology and geomorphology of a site beyond the level of mere aesthetic appreciation'.

National Geographic Society (2002) in a report "National Geographic Traveller Magazine" described Geotourism as tourism that sustains or enhances the geographical character of a place—its environment,culture, aesthetics, heritage, and the well-being of its residents.

Dowling and Newsome (2006) in his book "Geotourism: Sustainability, Impacts and Management" defined Geotourism as 'the tourism based on geological features and processes in the abiotic landscape'. For delaminating the boundary of Geotourism in response to other types of tourism, Dowling and Newsome made a clear opinion that Geotourism can be considered as a part of natural area tourism and ecotourism, but more than that it is a specialized form of tourism that primarily focus on geosites. It involves with visitation to geosites with the purpose of recreation and acquiring knowledge.

Besides, there are some other geographer and geologists who gave the contribution on the concept of Geotourism such as (Stueve et. al, 2002), Georgiana Gavrila et.al (2011), Vujičić, M.D. et.al (2011), Lima et.al. (2013), Alessia Pica et.al (2014), Kiernan (2015), Boskov et. al (2015), Maksoud and Hussien (2016), Tamara Visnic et al (2016) and so on.

Many deuls (a special type of temple normally called in Bengal and Orissa) of that period have noticed along the old river courses of Damodar, Kumari, Kansai and Subarnarekha which denote that Jain merchants had the major role to build up those deuls as they used those river routes for that trading purpose (Roy, 2007).The enormous evidences of Jain sculptures of 9^{th} century, as found in Puruliya, clearly denote the growing importance and spreading of Jainism over the Hindu dominated cultural places in Puruliya during the medieval period (Chowdhury, 2007).

Relevancy of theme – Geotourism is an emerging concept in the field of tourism which specifically aimed to study tourism potential of a place based on its geographical backgrounds and its resources. Puruliya is very poor region from economic point of view though it holds lots of physical and cultural resources. This topic of research primarily aims to discuss about the present scenario of Puruliya and its future potentiality of tourism using its vast physical and cultural resources (geology, environment, culture, asthetics, and heritage). So suggested planning models for geotourism sites can be used for economic development of the district.

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